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THE TWO ROADS

WITH A VIVID DESCRIPTION OF

SHERIDAN'S RIDE,

AND THE

BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK.

BY

TRUMAN B. DENNIS.

PRICE. TEN CENTS.

THE ABOVE IS A LIFE-LIKE PORTRAIT OF GENERAL PHIL. H. SHERIDAN AS HE APPEARED IN 1864, WHEN LABORING UNDER INTENSE EXCITEMENT.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is the aim and hope of the author that this pamphlet may not only prove interesting to the general reader, but that it may, through God's blessing and grace, which the author most humbly invokes, create a lively interest in spiritual things in the hearts of the Christians who may read it; and that it may awaken a desire in the minds of the unbelievers to search after, and seek to find the great truths and promises that are made in God's word, to the joy and salvation of their souls; for which reason the author has endeavored to so group the circumstances connected with the battle of Cedar Creek, that they may have a spiritual aspect and bearing, and hopes that the public will kindly read and carefully consider it in that light. The etching which was made especially for this work, and was designed by the author, and executed in pen and ink drawing by A. R. Wood, an eminent battle scene artist of New York, who was also with General Sheridan's army at the time, is worth one dollar to cut out and frame, and cannot be bought separately for less.

Most truly yours,

T. B. DENNIS.

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold! Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.

Brethren! it must have been a great source of strength to King David to know that God's spirit was always with him, and of comfort, to know that God's presence always overshadowed him; in all of his early life he had unmistakable proofs of God's watchful care over him.

Likewise, it ought to be, and undoubtedly is, a great comfort and help to all Christians to believe and know that God's spirit and presence is continually with them; that his loving hand leads them, and that the power of His right hand upholds them; it certainly is to me; and it ought to be a matter of great concern to the unredeemed to know that they cannot possibly escape from God's presence. There is no heights, no depths, no lengths, no breadths, nor any secret place where they can, for one moment, hide themselves from the all-seeing eye of God, who observes their every action and discerns their most secret thoughts and motives.

Fearful, indeed, will be the reckoning for those whose sins have not been cleansed, and whose garments have not been made white by the blood of the lamb.

The picture which David, the great poetic artist, has sketched for us, is one that is most beautiful to the believer,

and one well worth our study and contemplation. I, for one, am glad that he painted it.

But, brethren! I would like to ask, why such solicitude and watchful care over us on the part of God? Why the necessity for His spirit guarding us? Why for His presence to surround us. I know that God's wisdom is past finding out, and that His purposes are not fully revealed unto us; but in matters where we are so personally and individually concerned, it will be pardonable, yea, praiseworthy, in us to seek for the cause.

God does nothing haphazard, or by chance, and wherever God's hand is made manifest, you may be sure that there is a motive and an end to be attained, and possibly a necessity which prompts God to action; if so, what is the trouble here? Shall I tell you? Well, this beautiful picture which so enraptures us, has a reverse side. Shall I show it to you? Here it is.

Whither shall I go, oh, Satan, to escape from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I seek a hermit's retreat in some vast wilderness, thou art there; if I build my cottage by the lonely seaside, thou findest me; if I seek shelter in the humble home of the laborer, thy footprints are there to be seen. If I would hide me in the mansions of the wealthy, the stains of thy polluting power and the odors of thy dominion repulse me.

I will flee to the home of the moralist, one whose boast is that he lives up to the Law, or nearly so; that he is better than any of the Christians that he knows; that he has no knowledge of the existence of a devil—except by hearsay—

and for these reasons, God is under obligations to save him and his house. Surely, I shall be safe there.

I ring the bell, I step into the large vestibule; while waiting, I glance behind the door; ho, what is this? A queer piece of statuary, indeed, for a moralist's house—one of satan's imps—with a broad grin of satisfaction spread all over his face. It moves, and as it recognizes me its whole demeanor changes, and in threatening tones, and with fearful gestures, it charges me not to make any disturbance here. These people are drifting, quietly and peacefully, down the broad road; and it is better for them to be allowed to go peaceably along than for me to be compelled to take them by force. Almost frightened out of my senses, I rush for the house of a Christian. Surely, I will find peace and rest here. I enter—oh, horrible! the scarred consciences and lacerated, bleeding hearts, warn me too forcibly of the many and recent conflicts with satan. I make for the doors, and meet the Devil, face to face! The Lord save me! Lord give me the power for victory. Ho! Satan! whence comest thou? and what doest thou here? From going to and fro, up and down, through the earth, seeking whom I may, by deceit, by flattery or by violence, destroy. These Christians are the hardest of all mankind to overcome. Many will die rather than surrender; hence my personal presence.

But how dare thou to encroach on the precincts of God's redeemed ground? Has not Christ declared that all that God gavest me have I kept, except one? True, but Christ enjoined on His followers that they watch and pray, lest they fall into temptation; but many become weary, and fall asleep

in Zion, and I come upon them unawares, and *how* I do lacerate their souls; some I kill before ever they awake.

Most of you, brothers and sisters, have heard of Sheridan's Ride. I was with his army at the time, and know some facts and circumstances that you will not find in history. Hemmed in on either side by the rugged ranges of the blue mountains, lies the Shenandoah Valley traversed lengthwise, crosswise, and at right and left angles, by small rivers and large creeks; about sixteen miles below Winchester, Cedar Creek crosses it, from S. W. to N. E. On the S. E. side of the creek the country is somewhat broken and partly covered with forests. About four miles to the south is a long bold ridge called Fisher's Hill, up whose bold front the Winchester and Stanton turnpike winds it way. On this ridge the rebel General Early with his army, which had been recently reinforced, was strongly posted, on the 15th of November, 1864.

On the north and north-western side of Cedar Creek lies several plateaus or low table-lands, with small grades or embankments between them; back of these the ground gradually rises for a mile or more, to a ridge, which slopes off again towards Winchester. On the evening of the 18th the Union army, under command of Major-General Sheridan, was encamped, facing towards the south, and but a short distance from the creek, on those table-lands First came the 8th Corps, on a slope, immediately to the right of the turnpike; next to them, on their right, on a stretch of table-land, was a part of the 19th Corps. About two miles to the left, at the junction of Cedar Creek and the Shenandoah River, the 6th Corps was encamped, in a strong position. All of these camps

were fortified with breast-works, with their batteries in position, and was thought to be strong enough to resist any force that the rebels would be likely to have to bring against them, and besides, the officers and men were all old and well-trained soldiers, who had faced death on many a hard-fought field, and who had so nobly and bravely routed the rebel army out of Winchester, on the 18th of September, previous.

General Sheridan, not anticipating an attack from the defeated enemy, made his headquarters in Winchester. A few days previous General Sheridan had been called to Washington on important business, which fact was undoubtedly conveyed to General Early by some of the many rebels that were permitted to live within our lines. On the 18th there was a reconnoisance made to within a short distance of Fisher's Hill, and no indication of any movement on the part of the enemy was discovered.

About half a mile to the south of Cedar Creek, through fields and forests, across the valley, stretched the Union picket line, which, under the circumstances and peaceful appearance of the enemy, was thought to be all the safeguard that was needed, and the camp-guards, which ought always to be kept posted around the camp in an enemy's country, was dispensed with, at least that was the case in the 8th Corps. As soon as the rebel General learned that the great commander had gone on a long journey, he began to bestir himself, that he might take advantage of the loyal soldiers while they were deprived of the counsels, wisdom and warlike spirit of their great and good leader. He immediately sent out his spies, to seek out the weak places and unguarded points in the loyal camp. It

so happened that one of the corps was under marching orders, (that is, was ordered to keep themselves in readiness to march at a moment's notice, with three day's rations). Some of his spies soon learned of this fact, and also the position of the picket line that this corps picketed; after which, and carefully looking over the ground in front of that part of the line which was in the woods, and the best and easiest approaches to it, and leaving two or three shrewd spies to carefully locate any careless, drowsy or sleeping picket that might be found along the Union line; the others reported to their master, all that they had seen or heard: how that the 8th Corps was without camp-guard, that the 19th was under marching orders and that their picket line was through a large piece of timberland, with such other information as they had been able to gather.

As soon as having heard their reports, General Early's plans were quickly formed; he immediately sent out orders for ammunition and rations to be issued to all of the men, and that all of the Colonels should hold their regiments in readiness to march in light marching order, and for the batteries to be in readiness; then selecting some of the shrewdest, bravest and most trusty men, he ordered them to attire themselves in the uniforms of Union soldiers, and placing them under the command of some of his most discreet and trusty aids, ordered them under cover on the night of the 18th, to approach as near as possible to the Union lines, without being observed; to throw a parallel picket line along the front of the Union line that under the guise of friends they might intercept and hold any Union spies that might attempt to pass to or from the

rebel army, and to hold a reserve in the centre of the woods, and await further orders.

Waiting patiently until after midnight, to avoid the possibility of his movements being discovered, and the alarm given to the Union army, he quickly and quietly concentrated all of his forces in and behind the forest, and after learning from his spies that they had located several Union pickets who had fallen asleep, he ordered the spies to lead as many files of soldiers as (possible) stealthily, on to the sleeping pickets and to capture or kill them, without making any alarm or noise; to force from any faint-hearted ones the Union countersign; to leave two rebels on each post thus captured, who by strategy should keep the Union pickets on either side of them from discovering the change. As soon as this was accomplished he marched a company of disguised rebels through one of the gaps, and boldly approached the watchful Union pickets from inside the lines, with the right countersign, and representing themselves as a relief picket guard from one of the other corps that had been sent to relieve them, so that they could march with their corps, ordered them to fall in the rear, where they were carefully received, disarmed and kept quiet, under penalty of immediate death. When a sufficient opening had thus been made, General Early carefully and quickly marched his infantry through it; ordered his cavalry and artillery to move up as quietly as possible, within supporting distance, flanked the other corps, and took a position close by and on all sides of the 8th corps, who, as well as the other corps, lay hushed in quiet slumber, unconscious of danger; some of the soldiers dreaming of peace, some of war, some greeted again their

fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters; some hastening to the home of their love—clasped again in love's long embrace. The idol of their hearts, poor souls! this was their last embrace, for the cruel fates of war soon robbed them of the possibility of ever meeting again on this earth.

Others fought over again the battles of former days, and amid hail storms of shot, shell and canister, and the rattling of musketry over the bodies of the dead and dying, friends and foes, with bayonets fixed, and every muscle and nerve at its higest tension, boldly charged into the rebel ranks. I have heard it said, that some dreams are freighted with realism, and thus it was with theirs; for at the earliest dawn of day, the rebel army fell on to the unguarded and sleeping 8th Corps with demoniac fury. Hundreds were shot and bayoneted before they were fairly awake, or could get on their accoutrements, or grasp their guns. Hundreds fled without guns or accoutrements; many of whom were shot as they fled. The whole of the 8th Corps was thrown into confusion, and a large portion were taken prisoners; the balance beat a disorderly retreat. The 19th grasped their arms, and attempted to form a line of defence, but before they could get into position, they were pelted with a storm of shot, grape and canister from the rebel batteries which had come into position; also by those which had been captured from the 8th Corps and assailed, and flanked by the onsurging hordes of rebel infantry, were thus forced to make a hasty retreat, defending themselves as heroically as possible under the circumstances; and covering the fleeing 8th, they fell back some two miles or more and took a position on the second ridge towards Winchester.

The 6th Corps, under command of General Rickett, (who was wounded in the breast early in the day) were hurridly got into ranks and rapidly marched to the scene of conflict, and arrived in time to see the retreating 19th stubbornly resisting, but constantly giving way and falling back towards Winchester, and the rebels in possession of both of the camps, with many prisoners and some eighteen guns, and everything in the wildest commotion.

General Rickett soon discovered that he was to be made the special object of Early's warmest regards. Hurriedly getting his troops into line under a galling fire of shot and grape from the rebel batteries, and none too soon to meet the rapidly advancing infantry, they boldly and bravely withstood the onset, returning bullet for bullet, blow for blow, and bayonet thrust for thrust, and although furiously assailed on front and flank by overwhelming numbers, they for a time beat back and held in check Early's whole army, thus relieving the 19th from eminent danger, and giving them time to take and hold a new position. But they were soon so hard pressed and flanked by the victorious enemy, that they were compelled to give way.

Stubbornly contesting every foot of the ground, they fell back to the brow of the hill, where they bravely held their position, in defiance of every effort made to drive them. Our artillery, where were they, when prompt action was so necessary? Ah! Morpheus had spread his deadening wings over them, too. Oh! thou guardian angel, why hast thou not sounded forth thy bugle notes of alarm, art thou also asleep? Nay, but their ears are dull, and they would not hear my notes of warning. And thus the artillerymen were asleep, the horses were asleep,

and even the guns that should have been speaking in tones of thunder, and vomiting forth messengers of death and carnage, were asleep, with no one standing by to awake them; and thus many of the guns (I think eighteen) and horses fell an easy prey to the rebel horde. And in that ill-fated and deserted camp, hell reigned supreme for the space of about three hours.

Where is General Sheridan, the impulsive, indomitable Sheridan? Late in the evening of the 18th, he arrived in Winchester, from Washington; finding no reports from the front to indicate the need or knowledge of his presence there, weary with traveling, and in need of rest, he retired, to sleep. Without his own officers at the front, or the rebels knowing of his return, his peaceful slumber was disturbed at early dawn by the distant roar of artillery, which was a message to his quick ears that he was needed at the front. Hastily attiring himself, and springing into the saddle, without waiting for aids or orderlies, he turned the head of his war-horse towards the front.

As sweeps the tornado over the landscape, so swept Sheridan and his foaming charger, over the intervening miles between himself and his retreating army, through Middleton, and on the northern slope of the ridge, he met the demoralized 8th Corps interspersed with men from the 19th and 6th, fleeing for their very lives. Without slackening his speed, his clarion voice rang out repeatedly, "To the front men! to the front! you shall sleep in your old quarters to night!" His voice and presence, was like a powerful current of electricity in its magical effects on the fleeing men, who caught his inspiration, and the

most of them turned and boldly advanced to the front, and was soon formed into lines of battle, made up indiscriminately of men without regard to what regiments they belonged, and were ranged behind those brave men, that with a perfect consciousness of having already sustained an overwhelming disaster, but with a knowledge that they were on the side of God and Liberty, were nobly and resolutely holding and defending the brow of the hills. When General Sheridan slackened his pace, and halted on the top of the hill, amid a storm of bullets, shot and shell, where he could take a survey of the whole field, and his faithful soldiers discovered their noble commander, seated on what appeared like a small white cloud, but was really his foam-covered charger, there rang out such shouts along the whole line as could not have been evoked by the re-enforcement of a whole corps of soldiers. General Sheridan's plans were quickly made and executed ; sending his whole cavalry force on a detour with orders for them to vigorously attack the rebel left flank, then carefully supervising the arrangement of his whole line, and waiting only long enough for the cavalry to reach their point of attack, he boldly and rapidly advanced his whole line, and fell like an avenging angel upon the exultant rebels, who had flattered themselves that the Union army was so thoroughly demoralized, that they had only to throw out their nets and scoop them in like fish. They were neither expecting nor prepared for such an onslaught, and before they had time to comprehend the situation and prepare for it, they were as utterly routed and demoralized, and as fearfully slaughtered as the Union army had been in the morning. They lost all of the prisoners and guns that they

had captured in the morning, and which in their flattered security they had not thought it necessary to send to the rear, and a great many of their own men and guns besides. In their haste to get over the bridge that crossed Cedar Creek, they crowded each other and their horses and guns over the sides, into the creek ; in fact, they were as panic stricken as if the day of judgment had suddenly burst upon them.

Thus, a defeat was turned into a victory ; a dire calamity, into a triumph ; rejoicing filled the hearts of those who had been sorrowful, and loud shouts of victory ! victory ! rang through the old camps But what of the thoughtless, heedless, sleeping, 8th Corps? Many of their bodies lay cold and stark ; the light of whose eyes was gone out into utter darkness, and the drums of whose ears could never again hear the encouraging voice, nor the approving words of their great and good leader.

The watchful and the faithful rejoiced in their salvation ; but the heedless, the disobedient, and the sleepers bodies were cast into trenches to be trodden over by men.

Oh ! my brother, oh ! my sister, as died these sleeping soldiers, so dies the Christian soldier, who neglects to keep on the breast plate of righteousness ; who leaves off the helmet of salvation ; who fails to keep on the armour of God's word, and falls asleep in the camp of Zion. Christ, the righteous judge, shall come down in the power of His might ; His faithful and chosen hosts, shall be marshaled and led on from victory unto victory—from rejoicing unto everlasting and immeasurable joys. But the faithless and the slothful, shall be engulfed into everlasting darkness and despair What a dan-

gerous and fearful condition for a Christian to be found in, asleep in Zion. Not only in danger of the assaults of satan, but also exposed to God's anger and condemnation. Who has breathed out threatenings against them from the beginning. "They are barren trees, encumbering the ground without yielding any fruit, therefore shall they be hewn down, and cast into the fire," saith the Lord. Empty vehicles blocking the road to salvation, will neither move on themselves, nor make room for others to pass. Therefore, shall the Lord in His anger remove them.

"I would that ye were either cold or hot, but because of your lukewarmness, I will spew you out of My mouth," saith the Lord.

Christ would much rather have you to be an outspoken enemy, whom He could conquer by His power and love, than a sleeping, worthless friend, of whom He can make no use.

Now, brethren, these are not cunningly devised fables, to tickle your eyes and ears, and feed your imaginations, but they are solid truths from heaven, and facts from earth, which I do speak forth in sobriety and candor, telling you of the things that I have seen and heard. Yea, that I have felt and suffered in my own body and soul.

Oh! my Lord, is there no escape from this demon, this destroyer of the present, and the future happiness of mankind? Listen, hear the answer of the Lord our God:

"Whosoever will come, may come, and partake of the Waters of Life, freely."

"Whosoever believeth on Me, and that the Father sent Me,

and keepeth My commandments, hath everlasting life. He that believeth not, is damned, already."

To as many as believe on His name, gave He power to become *sons* of God.

For all power is given unto Christ Jesus to judge the quick and the dead ; to give life everlasting to as many as believe on His name and seek after righteousness, and also to bind and cast the devil and all of his followers that do not repent, into a pit of never-ending darkness and despair. But God has declared, that He takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that He would, that all men should repent and be saved. For which reason, and His great love for us, while we were yet sinners, God freely gave His own, and only begotten son for a sacrifice and an atonement, that we might escape through faith in Him, the just reward of our manifold sins and transgressions. And there is no other way given, neither in Heaven, nor among men, whereby we can escape, and be saved. But Christ has declared, "except we become as little children, we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of Heaven." That is, we must first feel our need of salvation, of the forgiveness and love of God, and our dependence on Him ; we must also have implicit faith, confidence and trust ; as a child looks to, and leans on its father and mother for what it wants and needs, so we should have implicit faith in God's love and ability to do all things for us ; and as a child is required (or should be) to bend and yield its will to the will of its parents, so we should, and must yield ours to God's. We also must lay aside all self righteousness ; for Christ has declared, that there is none good ; no not one. For all have sinned and come short, (that

is, there are none perfect in the sight of God), and He also declared, that He came not to save the righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance.

We must also lay aside our pride; and why not? For what is man when he stands before God? Not so much as an angle or ground worm is when compared to man. And God has told us, that He resists the proud; that the proud heart shall be brought low. And what are we, when God's power is brought against us? David said, that we are as the dust of the earth, before God; like the dust of the earth which is blown hither and thither, before the wind. Nevertheless, we are assured, because God has created us in His own likeness, that we, our souls, are precious in His sight, and that His mercy and loving kindness is from everlasting unto everlasting to them that love and serve Him. And He does not ask our service for naught. But Paul tells us, that all things are ours; that if we are God's, and God is ours; that the earth and the fullness thereof which belongs to God, is ours. Yea, more, for Heaven is ours; the present is ours, and the future is ours; and if we endure faithful to the end, God has promised that we should reign with Him, and wear a crown of glory. Therefore, my brother, let us make haste to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold of the Rock, Christ Jesus, by faith, while we are called to-day. For to-day, is the day of salvation; the present is the acceptable, and the only acceptable time. Then harden not your hearts, but accept Christ while He may be fond of you; for He has declared, that His spirit shall not always strive with man, but that He will at some fixed time, which may be the present with you, for aught you know. Leave the trifler, the mocker, and the

rejecter alone, to the hardness of their hearts. That those who reject Him, He will reject, and that those who mock at him, He will mock when fear comes upon them. How fearfully dangerous it is for you, my brother, to delay for one moment ; for God is a jealous God, jealous of His glory, of His honor, and of His just recognition and adoration, by His created and lawful subjects. It is dangerous, my brother, to trifle with God, and reject His proffered mercy lest our cup of iniquity be declared full, and we be cut off without a moment's warning.

I beseech you, therefore, my brother, in the name of Christ, to repent of your sins, and accept God's mercy, through faith in His son, Christ the Lord of all, and to do it now without one moment's delay ; for when the door of salvation is closed against you, there will be no more opening, neither is there any other possible way of escape.

Oh, God ! I know not, care not, what *boon* others may ask ; but as for me, give me *wisdom*, to love and serve Thee aright, for Christ sake, Amen.

Your humble servant,

Truman B. Dennis.

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